

PFLAG/T EDMONTON

FALL 1998

ANNUAL MEETING:

PFLAG/T ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

29 September, 1998

7:30pm

Gay & Lesbian Community Ctr

Suite 103, 10612 - 124 St

Everyone welcome, however members only may vote.

PFLAG/T Regular Monthly Business Meeting

01 8 September, 1998

7:00pm

Suite 103, 10612 - 124 Street

PFLAG/T Monthly Support
Meetings will be held the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm at the above address. We welcome parents of lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender children; gay, lesbian, and transgender people; and spouses of gay/straight marriages.



to 4:00 pm at Knox-Met United Church, 8307-109St, Edmonton, T6G 1E1

- Welcomes parents from all faith groups and encourages long-term, committed relationships for their lesbian and gay, adult children.
- wishes to network with other parent support groups in Edmonton, Alberta and across Canada.

For further information please phone [REDACTED] Ellen or [REDACTED] Lynne.

New Edmonton Parent Support Group

Alberta *FLAG* (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Faith Society is a new parent support and education group for parents of lesbian and gay children. This group:

- Offers an emphasis on educational outreach by parents;
- Meets on the last Sunday of each month from 2:00

PFLAG/T Speakers' Bureau

Summer Activities

The summer is a quieter time for the speakers' bureau. In June a well-received presentation to Grant MacEwan nursing students was facilitated by Tracy D. and involved both PFLAG parents and OUTreach students from the University

of Alberta. Lynn M and Ellen both volunteered on ACCESS TV's Friday night Help hotline. From June 19 - 23 our 12 foot PFLAG/T display table was heavily visited and received numerous compliments at the National (& Alberta) Registered Social Workers Annual Conference, held for the first time in 20 years in Edmonton. An impromptu talk on PFLAG/T and its services was given at one of the sessions.

During July plans are going forward to produce a revised version of the PFLAG/T poster so that it can be used not only in Edmonton but also can be sold for use by other groups throughout Canada and North America.

PFLAG/T speakers participated in two conferences during August: the Support Network Volunteer conference and the Lister Hall Annual Residents Conference.

Through the PFLAG Speakers Bureau, lesbian, gay and bisexual speakers were found for the University of Alberta Peer Educators training camp at Battle Lake, August 24th.

Edmonton City Hall

(Courtesy *The Edmonton Journal*, July 7, 1998)

by Ashley Geddes

Edmonton city workers are poised to join their counterparts in other large Canadian urban centres by having access to employee benefits for gay and lesbian couples...

... the city could face legal challenges by refusing the benefits in the wake of the Supreme Court of Canada decision earlier this year which gave gays and lesbians protection from discrimination, Mitchell suggested.

"It became more of an issue of the city obeying the law rather than something to be bargained," Mitchell said.

Providing same-sex benefits is not expected to cause a big financial drain on city coffers, judging by other cities which have offered them for several years, union and city representatives say.

Other cities with same-sex benefits include Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, London and Hamilton, Phair noted.

Many companies and institutions across Canada and Alberta, from IBM to the University of Alberta, have offered same-sex benefits such as eye care and supplementary health care.

Most have not extended pension benefits to gay partners because the Income Tax Act forces them to define "spouse" as being a member

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of the opposite sex or else they could lose tax exemptions on their contributions.

But the Ontario appeal court recently struck down that Income Tax Act section and the Nova Scotia government recently awarded pension benefits to two surviving partners of provincial civil servants who had same-sex relationships.

Both those provincial decisions are expected to place pressure on the Alberta government to extend benefits to gay couples, observers say.

On the Bookshelf

Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country

Michael Riordan

(Between the Lines: Tor. 1996) Courtesy *Perceptions*, Mar '98)

This work was the result of the author's 27,000 kilometre journey through every province and territory in Canada during one year and it contains more than three hundred intimate, person-to-person conversations with lesbians and gay men aged fifteen to eighty-one, including people of the First Nations, people living with HIV and AIDS, singles, couples, people living in communes and a number of

self-defined families. Riordon put notices, letters and ads in lesbian, gay and mainstream publications across Canada to find people for the book. He limited his search to people living in the country. The interviewer gave thanks for the aid of the Canada Council and the much-maligned Ontario Arts Council.

Michael Riordon has written many plays for CBC and is the author of *The First Stone: Homosexuality and the United Church*.

Unit I is entitled, "I always knew I was different," Unit II is "The Gay Lifestyle," Unit III is "Family Values" and Unit IV is "Knowing Our Place". Unit V is "The Homosexual Agenda" and Unit VI is "Over the Rainbow, Somewhere."

Those interviewed include Lee, a lesbian who raises hogs in Southern Saskatchewan; her partner Gail plans to go back to the University in the city. Wayne is a gay RCMP officer in Yellowknife and his partner Lloyd works in a local hotel. Jerry from Minto, New Brunswick, at the age of 37 years, lives with 50-year old Bruce who financed part of his hairdressing shop. Twelve years ago Jerry tested positive for AIDS.

Sean, Rick and son Etienne live in Kootenay, British Columbia. One of Etienne's

kindergarten classmates confessed that "Rick is your second daddy" --a hopeful sign.

Cathy's small group of women shared a wooded property south of Winnipeg where they engaged in carpentry and gave workshops in the school system for women in the trades. The Canadian writer Jane Rule and Helen Sontoff live on Galiano Island, between the British Columbia mainland and Vancouver Island, despite the absence of a fine hospital for the aged. Instead, they enjoy the help of friendly young people.

Some lesbians and gays do not live together. Dianne Crowell lives on the south shore of Nova Scotia where she runs R. Crowell Eel Processors Ltd. Her friend Wendy, living near the village of Cherry Hill, is a parole officer with Corrections Canada.

Contrary to straight belief, **Riordon found that the homosexual agenda is to live a life worth living.** This book quoted a suppressed study of the Bush administration that one in three teenage suicide attempts is directly related to struggle with sexual orientation. In Canada, this pattern would not be too different.* Riordon was surprised how many lesbians and gays are in

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recovery from alcohol and drug addictions.

Some women would only share their stories with fellow lesbians, so it would be interesting if a lesbian or a lesbian and a gay man collaborated on a similar study. My favourite interview is with Jane Morrison and Catherine Hughes where the milk cows are named for the anarchist leader Emma Goldman and writer Jane Rule.

This book is a nice corrective to the view that gays and lesbians live only in large cities where they are known from national television networks - ogling bums, breasts, leather and drag at the Toronto Gay Pride Parade.

Robert Michael lives on the Micmak reserve in Nova Scotia where murder and suicide abound. He has been denied a house on the reserve because he is gay and would not be having children. His friend Allan Frances-dresses in drag and remarks that "if he lived to be thirty, it is not bad for this place." **Barb found that coming out in the native community is as difficult as anywhere else. The tradition of shamans - medicine people - is long ago.** Cassie said she could be a lesbian in Toronto and could be an Ojibway on the reserve. Rick Potts lives on

Bear Island, a First Nation reserve, with a Cree father and an Irish mother and identifies as a two-spirited person, a native belief that went underground when the Europeans arrived.

This book would be of interest to all lesbian and gay people on the prairies who know so many rural people.**

Editor's Notes:

***In Alberta the attempted suicide rate for gay youth is 14 times the rate for heterosexual male youth (Dr. Christopher Bagley, Calgary, 1996) Is prejudice too often a family value here?**

** This book would also be of interest to parents of lesbians and gays whose sons and daughters have recently come out. It would support their hopes for the possibility of a happy and fulfilling life for their gay offspring in the context of a committed relationship.

BC FTM (Female to Male) Network

by Betty Ewing, Courtesy of PFLAG Vancouver, May '98

Many of us are aware of "sex-change operations" - we usually think of men becoming women. But there are many people who were raised as girls who also feel

that they are trapped in the wrong body. At the meeting I attended in March (see below), I learned that female to male transsexuals generally are not as visible or audible as their male to female counterparts, in part because they can blend into their surroundings, and in part because of their socialization as girls and women not to make themselves heard. Therefore, until recently, women or girls who sensed something wrong without knowing what it was, or who felt that their real selves were in the wrong body, did not know of available resources or information, and did not have role models.

Transgendered people are susceptible to the same self-destructive behaviour (substance abuse, suicide attempts, self-mutilation) that we know can affect our gay-lesbian-bisexual children.

When someone asked me recently what it is like (to be a woman who has no doubts about her gender identity or orientation, or about her role as a woman), I had trouble answering. This is one of the few areas of my life in which I fall into the majority group; I guess I didn't realize how much I take my sexuality for granted. It was as difficult to define or explain my mainstream-ness as it would be to step into someone else's shoes.

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FTM Etc is a Vancouver based peer-run discussion and support group for people who are assigned female at birth, but identify all or part of the time as male FTM Etc welcomes people who are exploring their identity as male, or the possibility that they may be FTM; considering the transition from female to male (with hormones and surgery), or at any stage of the transition; or living with a male identity in a female body without transitioning. The support group meets once a month.

The BC FTM Network will be member-run and will provide the following services:

- outreach to FTM's throughout BC
- information and peer support contacts for family, friends, partners and allies of FTM's
- contact information for local, national and international FTM resources and support
- educational services for health care providers, counsellors, teachers and the general public on FTM issues
- FTM-relevant library
- participation in community activities and

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- political actions benefiting transgendered people
- a web site offering resources and information specific to BC

Contacts:

e-mail: [REDACTED]

bcftmnet@hotmail.com

Snail mail:

BC FTM Network
PO Box 10,
1895 Commercial Drive
Vancouver, B.C. V5N 4A6

Booklets and other literature available from PFLAG/T Edmonton include:

- Dealing with Your Feelings: A guide to coming out for persons with gender identity issues, 1997*
- Deciding what to do: Some considerations for those who are thinking about sex reassignment, 1997*
- Reviving the Tradition of Alternate Genders*
- Gender Identity: an explanation, 1995*

Please phone [REDACTED] for free copies.

Edmonton area Transgender Support Line

Transsexual? Transvestite?
Do you feel "trapped" in the

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obstacles may be in the way. If possible, family members or significant others will also be interviewed.

Enrollment in Program - If a person is transgendered and wishes hormonal or sex reassignment surgery, then the *Real Life Test* is begun.

More information can be obtained from the Gender Identity Clinic, 450-7145 or from the Grey Nun's hospital Health Resources Centre, 450-7312.

OUR TRANS LOVED ONES

(Courtesy PFLAG Vancouver newsletter)

Mary Boenke is planning to edit and publish a book of collected writings by family members, partners, close friends and employers of trans persons. Submissions should be positive and accepting of your loved one's trans nature, but may describe the journey to that place of acceptance. Writings may cover anecdotes about family reactions, the struggle to learn about and understand trans issues, your emotional reactions, dealing with other family members and friends. Families of transgendered, transsexuals, cross dressers, intersexed and all variations

wrong body? Are you experiencing gender confusion? Or do you have a friend, relative, or co-workers who does?

There is no need to feel afraid. You are not alone. I can help. I can refer you to other agencies, clinics, doctors, and support groups.

Or you may just want someone to talk with.

I understand issues of security. All conversations are confidential and I will not keep your name and number unless you permit it.

For more information, or just to talk if this sounds like you or someone you know, call:

The Edmonton area Transgender Support Line -

[REDACTED]

Edmonton Grey Nun's Hospital

Transgenderism Program

At the Grey Nun's Hospital there is a Gender Identity or Transgenderism Program. Individuals seeking help can be referred to the program by their family physician, psychologist or social worker.

Assessment may take place over several interviews. This determines if a person is truly transgendered or not. If so, assessment then determines what the individual wishes to do and what problems or

of gender benders are included.

Submissions should NOT be by trans persons themselves, though they may assist and coach others. Submissions should be + or - 1000-2000 words. Poems and other lengths also considered. Send by email or surface mail to the addresses below:



Saskatoon

BREAKING the SILENCE

(Courtesy *Perceptions*, Apr '98)

Nearly 100 people showed up for the first Annual Breaking the Silence: Gays & Lesbians in our Schools conference on March 21. The conference, sponsored by the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, was aimed at educating teachers and school administrators about the plight faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual students and staff in the educational system.

The conference kicked off with a panel discussion featuring people who have experienced homophobia at

the hands of the school system. One panelist talked about her pain in having her kids verbally abused by classmates because their mother is a lesbian. Two recent graduates of the high school system talked about their difficulties in trying to deal with their sexual orientation in small town Saskatchewan. One former student, Erin Scriven, talked about her nine suicide attempts and the weeks she spent in a psychiatric facility caused largely by the lack of support in her school.

A parent of a gay son moved the audience with her discussion about the pain she and her son went through during the son's school years. She called on the school system to address the issues of homophobia and open up a sane dialogue about gay and lesbian people so those in the system can find support.

Originally a gay teacher had planned to sit on the panel but at the last minute decided it was not safe to openly disclose his sexual orientation. An empty chair was left at the table to demonstrate the fear of disclosure faced by lesbian and gay teachers. A non-gay counsellor, who works extensively with teachers, came down from the audience and sat in the empty chair and recounted her experiences

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working with lesbian and gay teachers who don't feel safe in the school system.

The afternoon was taken up with workshops and videos that were intended to provide some skills to assist educators in dealing with homophobia:

- In one workshop administrators looked at ways they could develop policy that would address homophobia and provide some degree of safety for gay people in the system.
- A second workshop was aimed at teachers and counsellors and looked at ways they could provide support for those students in their schools who are lesbian or gay.
- A third workshop previewed two videos that addressed homophobia in the educational system.

The conference was closed by the Hon. Pat Atkinson, Minister of Education in the Saskatchewan government. Atkinson expressed her hope that she could work with conference participants to make schools in Saskatchewan more supportive of lesbian, gay and bisexual people...

Organizers have already decided that the conference will occur again next year and be expanded to a two-day format.

It's A Lesbian Life!

Fall 1998

In Celebration of National Coming Out Day

Reprinted from Social Work with Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals by K. van Wormer et al, Forthcoming, Allyn & Bacon.

To the Editor:

Hi! my name's Flora, and I'm a biology major, a cellist, a senior, and guess what else... a lesbian. I think it's important to share with people different aspects of one's personality, especially an aspect associated with prejudice and negative stereotypes.

I'm coming out because if I say nothing, people assume I'm straight, which isn't true at all. I can't even think straight! I want it to be known, because I think diversity is something to celebrate, not to shun or be afraid of. After all, why shouldn't a womyn love a womyn or a man love a man? Men and womyn are in many respects almost different species, so to me it doesn't make sense to be heterosexual, even though it's the norm.



I want to refute the myth that sexuality is a preference. If you grow up in mainstream American society, everything around you says that you're supposed to be attracted to the opposite sex, from beer ads to parents to churches... it's assumed at every level of society. So finding out that your attraction might be otherwise is confusing because it goes against all the propaganda you've ever learned. The feelings are new and exciting, and don't seem

related to stereotypes, such as "the homely, old maid" or the tough, spiky-haired womyn. One's sexual orientation is a realization, not a choice, that can occur at any stage in life.

Since I came out to myself and friends last spring, I've been a lot happier and more self-accepting. Beginning in about January, my constant questioning, almost nagging thoughts - am I really a L...?, and not even being able to think the word (no, not Lutheran), has moved to describing feeling to friends, reading lots of coming out stories, going to the march on Washington last April, and telling my brother and parents in June. It would seem appropriate to add "finally" to the last part of the previous sentence, but coming out is a continuous process... one is always meeting new people and discovering new aspects of what it means to be lesbian/gay/bisexual. Once the question was answered (yes, Yes, Yes!), it was simply a good feeling to know about a part of myself that had been denied and rejected for so

long. Now I can have a gay old time!

Hearing Carol West-Dallas MCC lesbian minister - last Wednesday was really inspiring. It is amazing how much easier it is to come out today as compared to the 60's. There is certainly still harassment and discrimination, but by our being open, heterosexuals can become more educated and sensitive to the issues of bisexual/gay/lesbian persons.

Sincerely,

Flora van Wormer, '94

And in the churches...

CELEBRATION AT ST MARGARET'S

by Britt Perry
(courtesy PFLAG Vancouver)

On Sunday, June 28th, three PFLAG members joined in celebration with parishioners of St. Margaret's Cedar Cottage Anglican Church (the church where our PFLAG chapter meets) as they named their parish a "Reconciling Community".

St. Margaret's has worked for several years through a thoughtful process to reach this decision and now holds the noble distinction of being the **first Anglican church in Canada** to take this step. The process involved delving into the meaning of the Christian

baptismal promise to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect for the dignity of every human being.

A "Reconciling Community":

- affirms the full participation of all its members in the life of the Church regardless of sexual orientation;
- commits itself to work for the realization of this affirmation in the practice of the Church;
- names itself publicly as a "Reconciling Community" to indicate its commitment.

Cheryl, Andre and I found the celebration to be highly emotional and joyous. Included with the traditional components of the worship service were contemporary songs whose lyrics emphasized inclusiveness, and a children's story time during which *Heather Has Two Mommies* was read.

CANADA'S ANGLICAN LEADER APOLOGISES TO GAYS

(Courtesy *The Globe and Mail*, August 8, 1998)

Canada's Anglican primate and a prominent Toronto bishop have joined 93 other bishops from around the world in issuing a pastoral statement to gays and lesbians promising to continue to

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work for their full inclusion in the church.

The bishops, including the primate, Michael Peers, and Toronto bishop Terence Finlay, also apologized to homosexual Anglicans for not giving them a greater chance to speak at the Lambeth Conference, a worldwide gathering of Anglican bishops held every 10 years.

The statement...is dated Wednesday, the same day that the assembled bishops passed a resolution banning homosexuals from the priesthood unless they remain celibate, and disallowing the blessing of same-sex unions.

The vote was 526 to 70, with 45 bishops abstaining.

"We apologize for any sense of rejection that has occurred," the statement from dissenting bishops says, "You, our sisters and brothers in Christ, deserve a more thorough hearing than you received over the past three weeks." . . . the list of bishops' names attached to the statement shows the vast majority are from Western countries, including England, the United States, south Africa and Australia. The division . . . is between liberals from the West and evangelicals and conservatives who are mostly from Africa and Asia.